
EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE FUNDING HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

FONDATION DE FRANCE REDS- Réseau sur l'éthique le droit et le sida/The Network on Ethics, Law and AIDS (Cameroon)

In some contexts, longstanding traditions and beliefs lead to a lack of social and economic autonomy for women, and result in rendering women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Women currently represent nearly 60% of people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Network on Ethics, Law and AIDS (REDS) in Yaoundé, Cameroon is convinced that the fight against the disease requires a raised awareness and a better acknowledgment of women's rights within Cameroon society.

The project takes place in Bamiléké country in West Cameroon, where certain customs are particularly harmful to women, and cause an increase in HIV/AIDS incidence. Jean-Marie Talom, president of REDS, emphasises that "Behaviour change is only possible through a social consensus, by relying on the key actors of the society: the traditional chiefs and notables, the register officers, the association leaders, and the health organisations." Thus the project works on two levels. In the short term, it consists of raising awareness about the risks of HIV/AIDS, and in providing advice on practical prevention. In the longer term, the project addresses changes in mentality, by encouraging women to make themselves heard within their families, and by public authorities, via the formation of organised advocacy groups.

As a result of the project, sixty women have been financially supported for medical consultations, examinations and drugs. In addition, three awareness-raising workshops were organised, bringing together twenty-five community leaders, thirty women's association leaders, and twenty-five HIV/AIDS or women's reproductive health associations, to create spaces for dialogue, to bring attention to the feminisation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and to discuss together the condition of women in their society. Finally, a handbook on prevention has been written together by the traditional chiefs and the women about harmful traditional practices and women's rights regarding health and reproduction, and has been disseminated to local communities.



Women waiting for medical consultation

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